



a seat  
at the

# table

## Host Toolkit

CONVERSATIONS CREATE NEW POSSIBILITIES



# Conversations Create New Possibilities

---

Talking with neighbors and friends over a meal or cup of coffee is a time-honored tradition. It's also a great way to discuss important issues affecting our region's future, like growth.

A Seat at the Table brings together citizens from all walks of life to share ideas and find ways to make Gallatin County a better, more successful and connected place. Our community is at a critical juncture. As we experience growth and change, we have an incredible opportunity to chart a future that does not leave community members behind, disconnected and struggling.

A Seat at the Table gives you the opportunity to connect with neighbors and colleagues, hear from those you may not already know and together, inspire action.

Anyone can be a host a conversation during A Seat at the Table and all are invited to participate. Diverse perspectives are needed to create a better future for our region. During A Seat at the Table, conversations will be held all over the community: schools, places of worship, homes, business settings, and more. We have nearly 100 nonprofit leaders and 14 local government departments already on board, this initiative is shaping up to be the largest and most diverse opportunity for civic engagement in Gallatin County's history.



# About A Seat At The Table

---

Thank you for hosting a conversation as part of A Seat at the Table!

On Thursday, October 25, 2018, thousands of Gallatin County residents will take part in conversations about our community's strengths and challenges. A Seat at the Table aims to increase civic participation, foster new relationships and inspire action through small group conversations over a meal, a cup of coffee, after work or at any other time during October 25th or convenient dates between October 15th-31st.

At A Seat at the Table, we believe that conversations have the power to transform our communities and change lives. As we all know, our community is growing and changing. This growth presents us with an incredible opportunity to shape our future. Think about it: half of the community 25 years from now hasn't been built yet.

A Seat at the Table believes that all successful communities have something in common – they make it possible for a wide variety of citizens to be engaged in identifying community challenges and solutions. It's a thing we call "civic infrastructure", and it's the only reliable way to work together to create a better future.

We need everyone's help to develop creative solutions to our region's challenges. By having conversations with our neighbors, coworkers and others who call the Gallatin Valley home, we can all be part of finding new solutions that address concerns like affordability, access to childcare, transportation, open space, inclusivity, community health and more.

Each of us has a part to play. Each of us has a voice. Each of us has a seat at the table.

# Let's Get Started: Planning Your Conversation

## When and where to meet

Your A Seat at the Table conversation can take place at any time on October 25th, 2018. If that date does not work for you, hosting a conversation between October 15th-31st is possible. Meet when it is most convenient for you and your guests. Have your conversation over breakfast, lunch, dinner or any time in between!

You can host an A Seat at the Table conversation at your home, office, place of worship, school or library. There does not even have to be a table. You are welcome to hold the conversation anywhere you and your guests feel comfortable. You can order in, serve a home-cooked meal or make it a potluck or a picnic. Offering food at your conversation is optional!

## Who to invite

You choose who to invite. You can start with people you know: friends, family, coworkers and neighbors. You can reach out to new people. Ask your guests to bring someone you haven't met yet. Also think about bringing together people who may not normally have a chance to talk to each other. You may discover surprising common ground.

## How many guests

Six to ten guests works well for this kind of conversation. If you want to host a larger gathering, break into smaller groups so everyone has a chance to speak and be heard.

## Co-Hosting

You may choose to ask someone to be a co-host for your conversation. That way, responsibilities for inviting guests, leading the discussion and taking notes can be shared. It's up to you. You could join as a co-host with a local nonprofit agency, religious institution or other organization, over 100 groups have already signed up to be part of A Seat at the Table.

## Superhost

Some community organizations, individuals and businesses are signing up as Superhosts. Superhosts agree to host 10 or more public or private conversations for A Seat at the Table. As a Superhost, your public table locations and time frames will be listed on our website. That way, anyone in our community can stop by to join the conversation! Superhosts are asked to manage their own tables on this day. We will be asking you to promote your own public table through your information channels (email lists, social media, etc.) Consider inviting customers, employees, and more. We will be asking you to promote your own public or private tables through your information channels .

## Registration

To register as a host, visit [www.atthetablegv.org](http://www.atthetablegv.org) if you have not already. Registration is easy. You do not need any specific knowledge or background to host a conversation. Anyone can host!

## Learn more

To learn more, visit [www.atthetablegv.org](http://www.atthetablegv.org)

## Follow us on Twitter and Facebook

Visit our [Facebook Event Page](#). Join the county-wide conversation and use the [#AtTheTableGV](#) hashtag when sharing on social media.

## Contact our Steering Committee for support

Bridget Wilkinson // [bridget@bozemanfoundation.org](mailto:bridget@bozemanfoundation.org) // 406-587-6262

Jennifer Boyer // [boyerfarm51@gmail.com](mailto:boyerfarm51@gmail.com) // 406-539-3006

Randy Carpenter // [randy@future-west.org](mailto:randy@future-west.org) // 406-582-8937

Cathy Costakis // [costakisce@gmail.com](mailto:costakisce@gmail.com) // 406-581-8650

Alison Harmon // [harmon@montana.edu](mailto:harmon@montana.edu)

## Spread the word

Why are you hosting a Seat at the Table conversation? Why do you think it is important that we talk about the strengths and challenges facing our community as we grow and change? Not only do we want to hear from you, but we want others to hear from you, too. Encourage your guests to share their thoughts on social media before, during and after your conversation and to fill out our survey once your conversation is complete.

# Leading your conversation

All hosts have the opportunity to participate in a brief training that will be hosted on Wednesday, October 3rd from 5:30–7pm at **Barnard Hall at Montana State University** in Bozeman, Montana with dinner provided. During this training we will provide you with an overview of the initiative, tips and tricks for hosting a conversation and information on how to collect feedback from your conversations! Can't join us? No problem. This training will also be streamed online and recorded to be viewed at your convenience on our website.

Hosts will also be provided a consistent structure for their conversations and direction on how to capture the perspectives shared at this training.

## Conversation guidelines

Having conversation guidelines can help everyone feel welcome. We encourage you to share these guidelines with your guests. Additionally, ask them if they have any guidelines they would like to add.

- Allow time for everyone to share. Every guest's ideas and stories are important.
- Speak from your experience and listen to learn from other people's experiences.
- Treat each other with respect, even if you disagree about something.



# Sharing the guidelines with your guests

Below are some short sample comments you can use to explain the guidelines. Feel free to change or adjust to suit your conversation.

“I really appreciate that you made the effort to join us. To make sure that you all have an experience that is worth your time, we’ll use these guidelines. And please speak up if you see an opportunity to improve the quality of the conversation. Some of us will also be taking pictures and posting them to social media during our conversation. You are invited to do the same. Please let us know if you absolutely don’t want your picture included.”

“In some conversations, you may feel like it’s a debate where people try to get you to adopt their point of view. In this conversation, our goal is to learn how different people are experiencing changes in our region, especially around community growth, and the various ways we can contribute to solutions to these challenges. The more perspectives we hear, the more it expands our understanding and potential for new ideas. You may hear something today that you disagree with or something that doesn’t match your own experience. I invite you to get curious about why someone has a different perspective so we can learn from each other. Everyone came to this conversation because they care about their community. Everyone can also play a role in improving the conversation around community change, so please value and respect each other’s views.”

## Facilitation tips

- Invite everyone to share.
- Make sure that all participants have a chance to talk and that no one dominates the conversation.
- Encourage guests to explain why something is important to them.
- You do not need to come to agreement. Help your guests listen for areas of common ground and also for different points of view.
- Share paper and pens and the A Seat at the Table host kit to support guests who want to take notes during the conversation.

# A Seat at the Table conversation questions

1. What do you love most about your community?
2. What are the most pressing challenges in your community?
3. What are your ideas to make your community better?

## After the conversation: Seat at the Table survey

After your conversation please complete two more important tasks:

1. Go to [www.atthetablegv.org](http://www.atthetablegv.org) and fill out your "Host Survey". This is a summary of the themes of your conversation and should take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete.
2. Encourage everyone to take 10-15 minutes to complete an A Seat at the Table online survey [www.atthetablegv.org](http://www.atthetablegv.org) before they leave your table.

# Listening to your conversation: Host Notes

Use this page to take any notes during your conversation!

1. What do you love most about your community?

2. What are the most pressing challenges in your community?

3. What are your ideas to make your community better?



## What's next?

To understand how the A Seat at the Table experience impacted participants, there is a short survey for both hosts and guests to complete after the conversation.

A Seat at the Table will use the information collected through the survey to compile a summary report with the support of Montana State University, which will be made available to all registered hosts and guests. We will also be sharing with our community partners – businesses, local government and nonprofits and community groups.

A Seat at the Table is an initiative of the Bozeman Area Community Foundation and Future West. We believe that all successful communities have something in common – they make it possible for a wide variety of citizens to be engaged in identifying community challenges and solutions. It's a thing we call "civic infrastructure", and it's the only reliable way we can work together to create a better future.

We remain committed to increasing civic participation and dialogue around community issues and opportunities with the firm belief that conversations can create new possibilities.

Thank you for coming to the table!

